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P E R U S A L

OF Mansfield

Mr. LOFFT's HISTORY

OF THE

CORPORATION and TEST ACTS.

By a CLERGYMAN of the ESTABLISHMENT.

Mr G. H. of Clare Hall

BURY ST. EDMUND'S:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY P. GEDGE;

SOLD ALSO BY G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, LONDON; AND ALL THE
BOOKSELLERS OF SUFFOLK AND CAMBRIDGE.

1790.

PL 411. 1795. H^o 33.

PHILIP BOWES BROKE, Esq.

THOUGH I am personally almost a stranger to you, I am not unacquainted with the many amiable virtues which constitute your character. It is to these, in conjunction with the situation to which you were lately called at the meeting of the friends of the Church, that you owe the liberty which I am now taking. Perhaps too, by prefixing to the following pages the most deservedly popular name which the County of Suffolk can boast, I flatter myself with procuring to them a degree of attention, if not of favour, to which they might not otherwise be entitled. Propriety and justice demand that I should add, that as I had not an opportunity of soliciting your permission to use this freedom, it cannot be inferred that you either approve or disapprove of the sentiments which the work contains. I am, Sir,

With great Respect,
Your most obedient Servant,
The AUTHOR.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

IT was not till the beginning of this month that I saw advertised in the papers, "An History of the Corporation and Test Acts." I took an early opportunity of purchasing it, as I was desirous of gaining the fullest information on a subject, which attracts at present such general attention, and which indeed at all times, but more particularly now, is so extremely interesting. This I did not doubt but I should do, in the most ample and agreeable manner, from the pen of so accurate and elegant a writer as Mr. Capel Lofft. With this view then, and this only, I bought the book; but I found on sitting down to read it, that (to use a vulgar phrase) I had got more than I bargained for, that it by no means confined itself to the History, but contained a great deal of extraneous matter, much of which, in my eyes, is very objectionable. For my own private satisfaction I took up a pen, and began to note down, on a pretty broad margin, the passages

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from

from which I differed, and my reasons; but I found, as I proceeded, that my comments increased so fast, that with what I did put down, and with what I wished to put down, they grew nearly as bulky as the text. It was then that the idea first struck me of offering them to the public; whether they are founded in truth and justice must be left to that public to determine. Mr. Lofft is, I know, much too liberal not to wish that the cause should have a fair discussion. Although he will find that my sentiments are decisively opposite to his, yet, if he credits what I have asserted, he will find at the same time that my opposition was not premeditated; perhaps my wishes lead me too far, when I flatter myself that he will not think that it is carried on in an uncandid manner. I beg leave to assure him, that though I differ with him *toto cælo* both on religious and political subjects, with his opinions on the former I do not pretend to interfere; as to those on the latter, however erroneous I may think them, I admire the liberality and integrity from which they take their rise, but I must confess I cannot pay a similar tribute to the soundness of judgment. I am convinced that, constituted as human nature is, the perfection* of Government, of which he appears to be desirous, is not attainable, and that the preli-

* I allude to Mr. Lofft's approbation of the Declaration of Rights, published by the Constitutional Society, pages 28, 29, of his Pamphlet.

minary steps, which in his idea conduct to it, would, if taken, be productive of nothing but disquiet and confusion. I do not, however, for a moment doubt the purity of his intentions; I firmly believe that the general good is the end at which he aims: I too, in my turn, have a right to expect *his* favourable interpretation; I have a claim to be considered as actuated by the same motive, however widely I may vary from him, as to the means, which in my opinion conduce to it. I am aware of the disadvantage with which an anonymous writer enters the lists against so celebrated an adversary as Mr. Lofft, and I am sensible also that, in some particulars, I have taken the unpopular side; but I trust that what my cause wants in external splendour, it makes up in intrinsic soundness, and I rely on a discerning public not to be dazzled by splendid appearances, nor misled by a deference to great abilities. I have to add that, in making my observations on Mr. Lofft's pamphlet, I shall sometimes only quote the substance of what he says, and make my remarks upon it, sometimes I shall put down the exact words with my own strictures, just as they stand in the margin of the book; I shall be less regular and in form this way, but equally intelligible, which is the main end of all writing. I protest however against wilfully misunderstanding any passage, or artfully selecting any quotation,

which bears a different sense, when taken alone, from what it will admit of when taken with the context. I have opposed nothing for the mere sake of opposition. Where I could with justice bestow, I have not withheld my approbation.

At the opening of the pamphlet, Mr. Lofft seems inclined to disallow an assertion which had been made by a writer on the other side, "that disputes run high between the Church and the Dissenters." Whatever they might do when the *Address* was written, they certainly have done since; they have done for weeks; they have done for months past. I appeal to the public prints, which are the echoes of what is passing in the world, for a proof of it; I appeal to the various and crowded meetings, which have been held both by the friends of the Church and the Dissenters, at which each party seems to have given the candidates for it's favour to understand, that their past conduct or future engagement with respect to the Test Act, is the sole hinge, on which it's support or rejection will turn. Can any thing shew more pointedly that party, that disputes run very high? The large majority by which the Church has carried it's cause on this last trial of strength, will, I flatter myself, tend to put a stop to these disputes.—

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Where there is no hope there can be no endeavour; and surely, when we consider what has lately passed both in and out of Parliament, that is at present the case.

In his second and third pages, Mr. L. alludes to a much talked of Letter of a learned Bishop. His Lordship's zeal has, I fear, carried him too far; an advantage of it, it is said, will, if possible, be taken by his enemies; however, I maintain, that in every other point of view, except his being a Peer, his advising his Clergy is more than defensible. The Bishop is such a man as the times require, learned, zealous, intrepid. With respect to his having gained a durable *celebrity* from the works of Dr. Priestley, the Doctor, I beg leave to observe, has much greater reason to apprehend it from the works of the Bishop. It would be very presumptuous in me to pretend to determine, where two such learned Doctors disagree; yet even the most unskilful readers will have their opinions, and I cannot help thinking, that the Bishop has clearly proved that, wherever the truth of the question agitated between them lies, his opponent is incompetent to decide it. I would wish to recommend to all those, who would see what manner of spirit Dr. Priestley is of, to read the above mentioned Prelate's chapter on the general spirit of the Doctor's controversial writings.

At the bottom of the third page, and again towards the conclusion, Mr. L. attacks Sir John Rous on his late change of sentiment. It is not my business or intention to assume to myself the office of Sir John's apologist; but I must ask those who condemn him so strongly, whether it be necessary that a man who has once imbibed and declared an opinion, should, in defiance of every alteration of time or circumstances, and notwithstanding any new light which may be thrown on the subject, invariably persist in it? Are the principles of Stoicism revived? *Sapientem sententiam mutare nunquam* was, I thought, a maxim only of the followers of Zeno! Sir John's first letter to the Clergy was, I believe, pretty generally disliked, because, though it contained some reflections on the conduct of those whom he had supported before, it seemed to give neither party any *certainly* with respect to what he meant to do in future: but he has since spoken in a manly and decisive tone; though in one which has not, it seems, endeared him to the Dissenters.

P. 6 and 7, Mr. L. thus expresses himself:—
The principles of religion and morality will break forth in human society, wherever there is any room for the exercise of sympathy and of reflection; and where the Gospel is in any degree known, beneficence, the veneration of infinite goodness, and a conduct in
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some degree conformable to the hope of immortality, announced by a divine mission, and confirmed by the resurrection of Christ, will diffuse a salutary influence; neither lost amidst the variance of sects, nor crushed by the enormous pressure of any Establishment.

This is true, but the last clause deserves notice. If Mr. L. and his *protégés*, think an Establishment so detrimental to Christianity, are they not, if conscientious and consistent, bound to do their utmost to overturn it? And are not we, who are convinced of it's utility, called on to do all we can to prevent the latter from making any accessions of power, which may in it's consequences give scope and force to their exertions? I will take this opportunity of saying a few words in favour of Religious Establishments in general. Though the Christian Religion may be understood in a competent degree by the illiterate, it must be allowed that this degree could not be attained but through the labours and instruction of the learned. It may therefore be assumed that teachers of Christianity are necessary. But where should these be found, if some adequate motives were not held out to induce men to undertake and to qualify themselves for the office? Whoever is the least versed in the subject cannot but know, that the learning which is requisite in a Minister of the Gospel, and the occupations in which he must be engaged, are quite
incom-

incompatible with any worldly trade or profession. The scriptures, from their being written in dead languages, in remote ages, and in distant countries, and many parts of them on particular occasions, are attended with infinite difficulties, and various other kinds of learning are necessary to their being completely understood. If to the hours which the pastor must devote to the acquisition and communication of knowledge, you add the attention which his office demands of him to the situation and wants of his flock, you cannot suppose that he will have sufficient time remaining to apply to any secular means of gaining a subsistence. Let it be observed that I speak of the Clergy as they ought to be, and as very many of them certainly are. Now it is indubitable, that but a small number of men of abilities would give themselves up entirely to such studies and employments, if they had not a moral certainty of acquiring a maintenance by them, and a possibility at least of arriving at wealth and honours. Zeal would do something, but zeal would never operate in a degree sufficiently permanent and extensive, that each district of the country should be uniformly supplied with a pastor, as it is at present, if the Church was the only profession which denied to its followers the probability, independently of the caprice of others, of living by their labours. Let it be granted, it will be replied; but why not
 receive

receive the rewards of their ministry from the voluntary contributions of those who benefit by it? "To
 "voluntary contributions" (as Mr. Paley* justly observes) "there is this insurmountable objection,
 "that very few would ultimately contribute any
 "thing at all. However the zeal of a sect, or the
 "novelty of a change, might support such an experiment for a while, no reliance could be placed
 "on it as a general permanent provision." But I contend still farther, that a dependence on voluntary contributions is a state extremely degrading to the pastor, and in its probable effects no less pernicious to the flock. How many elevated sentiments, how many manly virtues are connected with independence, and surely that person must bid an eternal adieu to it, who relies even for his daily bread on the precarious bounty of those around him! This is true in general, but it is more particularly so in regard to him, who is by the nature of his office called on, "to reprove, rebuke, and exhort:" if he accomodate his doctrine to his hearers, if he be silent or palliate the indignity and danger of their follies and vices, the consequences on the eternal welfare both of himself and them are sufficiently obvious; but if he has a mind superior to such diffi-

* This subject which I have endeavoured to compress into as few words as possible, is handled in a very masterly manner by Mr. Paley, in his Chapter on Toleration and Religious Establishments.

imulation and meanness, if he dare to speak and act with freedom and authority, he is too likely to reap the fruits of his integrity in the diminution or total loss of his subsistence. If it be objected that some of the Established Clergy answer very indifferently the ends of their appointment, and if the learning of the Dissenters*, who have no regular stipends on which to depend, be alledged; to the first I reply, that you cannot argue from a few partial abuses of an institution against its general use, that there must be deficiencies and imperfections, wherever human beings are concerned, and that it is sufficient if the design of Government, in its Church Establishment, be answered in a great measure and upon the whole: as to the second, let it be remembered, that the Dissenters have always had access to the writings of the Established Churches, and that it is very difficult to define the extent of their obligation to them. Those learned Dissenters, who decry Establishments, appear to me guilty of similar ingratitude with the patrons of natural reason, when they disparage revelation; they each alledge the lights, which they have derived from excellent institutions, as arguments against the necessity of their existence. “ We have laboured (may the
 “ Members of the Establishment say to the Dissen-

* Those Dissenters who have been *in* the Church are out of the question, as they certainly may be considered as allured originally to Scriptural Studies by the rewards of the Establishment.

“ ters) and ye have come into our labours:” or we may justly apply to ourselves, when we speak the most modestly, what Tasso, when he had perused the Pastor Fido, said of himself and Guarini, “ If he had not read the Aminta, he had not excelled it.”

Page 9.

With regard to the laity, if they are cordially members of the Established Church, its is easy for Government to learn this by their general conduct.

There is no way so easy as by observing whether they partake of its most solemn rite in the manner which it has ordained. If they profane it, surely the guilt of the profanation lies at their own door. It is too absurd to attribute it to the Government, who has no other so adequate way of discovering whether those whom she would wish to employ are attached to her in all her branches. As well might the guilt of forgery be attributed to them who first established paper credit.

Page 11.

Ignominy and incapacitation are the legal consequences, in a free state, of known and proved crimes: not of the jealousy of a court, or the fiercer and more implacable hatred, which not even courts without the aid of a famed alliance would be capable of exemplifying in its utmost force.

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The clergy are Mr. L.'s most obedient servants : though I foresee it may be said, *Qui capit, ille facit.*

Page 13.

Lord Mansfield is quoted as asserting, that at the time the Corporation Act was made, " a spirit of intolerance prevailed; and the Dissenters were treated as persons ill-affected and dangerous to the Government."

The country had dearly experienced the truth of this but a very short time before.

Page 14.

If the Dissenters had no fear of being admitted, Corporations might have the courage to elect them; without cause to fear that by so doing Church and State would be overthrown.

Will any of the great leaders of the Dissenters say, that they do not wish the downfall of the Church, or (what amounts to the same) an alteration of its articles, discipline, and liturgy, and an adaption of them to their own particular prejudices? And, if we think them sincere and earnest in their religious principles, could we believe them if they did?

At the 16th page, the *ingratitude* of the Court of Charles the Second is censured in being pleased that the edge of the Test-Act should fall on the Dissenters, of whom it is said to have been immoderately

derately jealous. Let us consider this so frequently urged claim of the Dissenters to *gratitude*, not only at this, but at other subsequent junctures. But first I must premise that, if I understand in whose name these claims are made, it is chiefly in that of the Presbyterians; and if so, it may very justly be replied, that though we should allow them, they would very little concern the major part of those who are so strenuous for the repeal at the present day; who are no more Presbyterians than they are Mahometans.—However I will wave this plea, and considering them as the genuine and legitimate descendants of Calvin, as such examine into the deserts of their forefathers. Added then, I think, to their general merit as good subjects (for which, I should suppose, they ought to think themselves amply requited in the protection of the laws, and in the blessings of a regular and mild Government) they bring forward their particular services at four important periods: at the Restoration, at the Revolution, and at the Rebellions in 1715 and 1745. With respect to their behaviour on the two latter, it will be readily granted, that they concurred with the members of the Church in resisting and in quelling them.—We assert that the religious principles of the Dissenters would induce them, as honest men, if they had the power, to accomplish the downfall of the Church, and we apprehend that the political principles

ciples of not a few of them, if carried into practice, would (however contrary to their intention) be extremely prejudicial to the State; but we do not say that they are bad Christians, or designedly bad citizens, still less that they are *imprudent* men.— Now, I should be glad to know, with what possible pretensions to these qualities, they could have assisted the projects of the exiled family, or even have remained neuter during its attempts? Interest as well as principle led them to that which was their duty. They had too much to hope from the legal government of a Brunfwick, and were too well acquainted with the mild forbearance of the Church of England, not to dread to exchange them for the arbitrary rod of a Steward, and the sanguine intolerance of Popery. What! it will be said, allow no merit to those, who when their country was in danger, flew to defend her with all the terrors of the Sacramental Test hanging over their heads. They who lay any stress on this circumstance, well know that they are talking of terrors which did not really exist. We read, indeed, of a Roman soldier, who, for accepting the challenge of an enemy, contrary to the prohibition of his commander, though the commander was his own father, and though he was victorious in the contest, was punished with death. We read of a young Spartan, who for presuming, contrary to a standing law of his

his country, to enter the battle without his armour, though it was in defence of the very walls of the capital city, and though his services were so important as to deserve and obtain the erection of a statue, was heavily fined by the Ephori: but such excess of justice (for such I must call it) has long been out of practice, and (whatever may be pretended) the Dissenters in contributing to the preservation of their country had nothing to apprehend from its laws. Well, says the Dissenter, supposing I were to grant this, yet you must allow my ancestors a large share of patriotism in fighting for a Government, which had treated, and still continues to treat them in so harsh a manner!—They knew what they did: the English Government says, “either
 “ conform to the religion which I encourage, or
 “ remain in a private situation; I wish you to en-
 “ joy your revenues, or the fruits of your industry
 “ in peace and tranquility; I would have you to be
 “ happy, but I dare not trust you to be power-
 “ ful;” whereas the constant language of the Church of Rome has been, “the Mass or the Gal-
 “ lows.” With respect to the Restoration, permit me to ask, whence arose the necessity for it? Had kingly government never been abolished, it need never to have been restored; and it is superfluous to say by what description of men this abolition was brought about. Churchmen certainly joined at first with Dissenters in resisting the arbitrary measures of

Charles;

Charles ; but in the course of the contest, when they found what was aimed at, and that no concessions of the Crown were likely to content those with whom they acted, they for the most part withdrew themselves. It was the Dissenters (I speak indeed chiefly in this first clause of Independents) who brought their monarch to the block ; it was the Dissenters who drove his family from the kingdom ; it was the Dissenters who expelled the Bench of Bishops from the House of Lords, and afterwards voted the House itself useless ; it was the Dissenters who established republicanism ; and lastly, it was the Dissenters who enacted the famous Ordinance, by which the use of the Common Prayer-Book in a private family subjected the offender to a pecuniary fine for the two first offences, and to a year's imprisonment for the third. At length they began to experience the ill consequences of the confusion and anarchy which themselves had introduced ; (the Presbyterians, as well as the Royalists, being kept under and oppressed by a sect which had arisen out of themselves) and certainly did concur with the friends of mixt monarchy in resorting to the only true remedy. But can they make a merit of this ? As well might a man, who had pulled down his neighbour's house, because it impeded his own prospect, upon finding some ill effects arise to himself, which he had not foreseen, make a merit of joining with the owner in assisting to rebuild it. With respect

spect to their claim of gratitude for their services at the Revolution, it is notorious that the Presbyterians were consenting to James's design of repealing the Sacramental Test, by which the Papists would have gained admission to all places of trust and power, and possibly have overturned the constitution. But when this design miscarried through the efforts of the Church, they (the Presbyterians) encouraged their new friend in the dispensing powers which he assumed, and were several of them, together with Roman Catholics, promoted in consequence; then, as now, preferring the furtherance of their own views to other superior considerations*. If they afterwards went over to the Prince of Orange, it might be from patriotism, or it might be from interest, for such was the infatuated absurdity of James, that it very soon became evident how affairs were likely to go. Having gone through this examination, I leave the reader himself to form his own estimate of the share of merit which falls to the Dissenters, at the four periods discussed above: if

* I particularly allude to the association which there is among the Dissenters, to support no candidate at the next Election, but those who will vote for a repeal of the Tests. Be their resolutions couched in what words they may, this is the true sense of them. I anticipate the retort on the Church; but be it remembered that *theirs* was attack, *ours* is only defence, and that too of our strongest bulwark, when it is natural to use any weapon which presents itself. Perhaps, however, to speak candidly, the spirit of party has carried both sides too far.

I have misrepresented facts, his better information will readily enable him to detect me; if I have argued upon them perversely, his superior judgment will easily assist him in extricating himself from my false conclusions.

Pages 17, 18, and 19, Mr. L. gives the History of the Test Act, and the penalties which are incurred by neglecting to comply with its injunctions. They are dreadfully heavy: perhaps it would, on all accounts, be better that they were lighter; as offenders against the Act are now most likely to escape with impunity, from the reluctance which would be felt to subject them to such severe punishment. Perhaps the Act would be more effectually, as well as humanely, guarded by a milder sanction. It is the unlimited repeal of it, without any succedaneum, against which, I believe, it is generally objected.

In the 20th page, it is observed, that an information is now depending against the Mayor of *Nottingham*, for neglecting properly to qualify. Is the Mayor a Dissenter? If he is, he must know what a strict law of his country he is transgressing in filling his present station. If he is of such principles as the Government requires, and has merely through want of opportunity, or inadvertency, omitted the matter of form, it is the height of malice or avarice to put the Act in force against him. There is, and
ought

ought to be, a difference between offences against the spirit, and mere letter, of the Law. Far however be it from me, in any event, to commend the information: while instances of Dissenters in office are not frequent, they may with safety be connived at.

Page 22.

Convinced that Roman Catholics (for the term of Papists as acknowledging a civil supremacy in the Pope, paramount to the laws and constitution of the state, of which they are members, is now obsolete) are capable of sincerely co-operating in the maintenance of the political rights and liberties of this country: I wish all bars of exclusion, founded on any difference of religious sentiment, to be utterly removed. Some may think this avowal impolitic: but it is more than policy, it is duty, to avow the whole truth, where principles essential to the rights and interests of a community are concerned.

I have transcribed the above on account of its great liberality: If Catholics really disallow the civil supremacy of the *Pope*, I see no reason why they have not an equal claim to a participation in the trusts and emoluments of Government with any others who differ from its Religious Establishment. But surely it is politic, as I shall attempt to prove hereafter, to deny it to all.

Page 24, Waller is mentioned with applause, as having argued very acutely against Members of the House of Commons coming within the Test Act. I am not disposed to dispute his merit in this particular: in political desert he did not abound, yet among what little he had, let us not forget an excellent speech of his against the abolition of Episcopacy. It is preserved in Johnson's life of him.

Mr. L. thinks it is of less importance what *William, Prince of Orange*, said or thought of the Test Act, at a particular juncture, than what were his sentiments and conduct as King of England. This I cannot determine; but as Mr. L. has given us his declaration to Parliament when King, it is proper to oppose to it the substance of his answer to the application of *King James* when *Prince*,
 “ that he thought very well of liberty of conscience,
 “ but by no means of giving employments to those
 “ who were not of the National Church.”

In reply to what is said of Charles the First,
 “ his talents, and possibly his heart, with other
 “ guides, meriting a more auspicious destiny; and
 “ of persons of a very different description from
 “ Dissenters having conducted him in the path
 “ which alone could have led to the scaffold ;”—I affirm, without the smallest hesitation, that his heart *was* good, and his talents respectable. I admit that he wanted steadiness, and in the times in which
 he

he lived, he might as well have wanted every thing. I detest the rancour of his enemies, and think with horror of the times, which preceded and followed his death : but readily own that much good was the result on the whole : no thanks however to the chief instruments of it, in whom malice and self-interest were the motives to induce them to do what they did : I speak of those who pursued the Martyr to the block, and rose on his ruin,

Page 26 contains a challenge to prove that the execution of Charles, and the subsequent events, have the approbation of the Dissenters of this day as a body. I answer that I know no other way of judging of their sentiments as a body, than by the sentiments of those, whom themselves hold forth and admire as their heads. I believe we might long call in vain on any of these to confess, that the execution of Charles was an infamous act : as to the subsequent events, they are of a mixt nature, and he must be a strangely prejudiced politician indeed, who would defend them in the gross.

Page 28, Mr. L. says; “ that it induces a smile
 “ to observe in what manner the Declaration of
 “ Rights, published by the Constitutional Society,
 “ is mentioned, as if it were the Act of a Body of
 “ Dissenters, which was neither then” (he affirms)
 “ nor is now true.” What the religious principles
 are, of those of whom the Constitutional Society is
 C 3 composed,

composed, I know not, nor am I prepared to say that every innovator in Politics is a Dissenter in Religion; but this I do know, and this I am prepared to say, that it has been found by experience, that the *generality* of Dissenters in Religion are innovators in Politics. I do not believe that this will be disallowed; (at least not by each for himself) nor do I think that the imputation will be looked on as a reflection; I mean not to attribute it to any sinister views, I do not consider it as proceeding from a defect, but from a redundancy of patriotism, a redundancy however which wants to be reduced and sobered down by a greater attention to the capabilities of human nature. I think also that those who are already satisfied with the happiest Government that the world ever saw, a Government under which we enjoy a liberty of speech and action equal to what was ever experienced in any of the freest Democracies of Antiquity, together with a degree of order and security which was unknown to them all, are loudly called on to resist the advancement of a body of men, who, under the name, and (to speak candidly) with the view of reformation, would introduce among us, in our apprehensions, a long series of disorders and confusion. I must own I highly approve of that maxim so dear to the *Venetian Republic*, at least when applied to so happy a Constitution

tion as our's, "*Ipsa mutatio consuetudinis magis perturbat novitate, quam adjuvat utilitate.*"

Page 29, Mr. L. censures in a very liberal manner the speaking contemptuously of the lower rank and order of the people: would to Heaven that all our Reformers would comprehend in their Reforms or rather begin them with this class! I speak more particularly of one division of them, our agricultural labourers, who experience, God knows, grievances and distresses enough. Our yeomanry and those orders of men who may be considered as on an equality with them, are already high enough in the scale; "in this picked age they already press so near the heel of the courtier, that they gall his kibe." These want no accession of importance; these have no grievances worthy of being redressed; but he who could gain to our lowest orders a general increase of the wages of their honest industry, together with a diminution of the taxes on the necessary articles of their consumption, would be indeed a Patriot. These are the only benefits for which they wish, or of which (to speak soberly) they are susceptible.

Page 30, Mr. L. expresses his expectation that at the *Public Meeting* at Stowmarket then approaching, the Gentlemen who gave notice of it meant to leave the subject open to debate. Surely it is to be lamented that this expectation was not answered,

answered, surely it reflects some portion of discredit on a cause, to allow it to appear to fly discussion.

There are several other passages in the Pamphlet to which I object, such as its being taken for granted that the coalition of Dissenters is formed merely by the pressure of the Establishment; the laying a stress upon the two acts in question operating upon the *sincere* alone; the assumption that if the Repeal should take place, and Dissenters become admissible to all situations from which they are now excluded, the *actual* appointments would in general be the same; but though I am not disposed to allow the weight of some of these, and the justice of others, yet as they will scarce admit of an argument, and I could of consequence do little more than oppose my opinion to Mr. L.'s, I have passed them by.

I have taken no notice likewise of Mr. L.'s opinion of the probable durability of our Church Establishment, because I entirely agreed with him, though not on the supposition on which he went, of a Repeal of the Test Acts. I find however that both of us think differently from one who seems, in Mr. L.'s ideas, to be a person of mighty consequence*—I mean Dr. Priestley. While I

was

* See page 3 of the History we have been considering; see also Mr. L.'s letter to a friend on the subject of Dr. Knowles's publication,

was writing these pages, his famous preface has fallen into my hands, in which he seems to rejoice over the general association of the friends of the Church, and apparently to cherish an expectation that our infatuation (as he calls it) is portentous of her fall. He has a confused notion of it, to which, I presume, his wish alone is father, for he either knows not, or cares not to say, from whence or how the blow is to come. A similar infatuation, he observes, prevailed with respect to the American war, a similar catastrophe he thinks not improbable; he consoles us, however, that as we are now beyond expectation flourishing and happy without America, so also we may hope to be without the Church.

cation, in which he intimates the impending vengeance of the sword of Dr. Priestley: but that his ingenious opponent may not entirely sink under the apprehension, like the romance writers of old, he dubs the sword of his hero with a name, the name of MITRE-GIVER! If this be really it's property, what Churchman would not wish to be of sufficient consequence to provoke it! The bare idea almost tempts me, humble as I am, to burst from my concealment, to proclaim my name and enmity to the Priestleian doctrines, and to cry out, not to the Doctor only, but to his associates also, in the words of Nisus, in the famous Epitode,

Me! Me! adjum qui jeci, in me convertite tela.

APPEN.

A P P E N D I X.

THE opponents of the repeal of the two obnoxious Acts are frequently accused of Bigotry; by which I suppose is meant a violent and blind attachment to the form of Religion which themselves profess, and a narrow minded abhorrence of every other. I beg leave to assert, that it is by no means necessary that a man who opposes the admission of those who differ from the Establishment to offices of trust, should be actuated by such a principle. As to myself I avow that I think the most highly of the doctrine, discipline, and liturgy of the Church of England, but I do not pretend to maintain that it is in any of these particulars perfect; I do not pretend to maintain that it is not susceptible of emendation; nor do I presumptuously conclude, because I am disposed to think the best of it, that it is *therefore* superior to all others. I disclaim likewise the entertainment of any personal dislike to the Dissenters, or of any unfavourable notions of their piety and morality. Limited as my acquaintance among
them

them is, I know several instances of characters eminent for both, and I am of opinion that to think otherwise of any, merely because they differ from ourselves, is in the highest degree uncandid and unchristian. The present Bishop of Llandaff, in the appendix to his Tracts, after mentioning the opposite opinions in Religion, which some of our most eminent scholars and best men have maintained, in a manner truly becoming a christian prelate demands,

“ Who will take upon him to say that these men
 “ were not equal to each other in probity and christian knowledge? And if that be admitted, surely
 “ we ought to learn no other lesson from the diversity
 “ of their opinions, except that of perfect moderation and good-will towards all those who happen
 “ to differ from ourselves.” But why then, it will be said, if you profess this good-will to the Dissenters, why oppose them in their exertions to recover their civil rights, which, in their conceptions, are so injuriously withheld from them? The reasons are obvious*. First, because of the confusion which would inevitably ensue amidst so many jarring interests, each sect eager to advance its friends and depress its enemies, religious unions and religious animosities being of all others the most potent and overbearing: secondly, because, as I have already

* These objections, I know, will be called trite and stale, but they are not on these accounts the less just.

observed,

observed, it has happened, from I know not what fatality, that the generality of Dissenters in religion are innovators in politics; those of us therefore who are already contented with the Constitution, and who believe we could not change but for the worse, are called on to prevent as many as we can of the dissatisfied from making all accessions of power, which they would immediately, as we apprehend, be exerting in new modelling and reforming.

But even if we should relinquish this second objection against the Repeal, and insist only on the first, that, and its probable consequences would be alone sufficient; for so encroaching is human nature, that though the Dissenters now assert that the concession of their present demands would fully satisfy them, and that they should then allow, that they were compleatly tolerated, I must own I have my doubts whether new prospects would not soon open upon them, whether the removal of disabilities, and the acquisition of perfect equality, would not generate new aspirations,

— case would recant

Vows made in pain, as violent and void.

Perhaps, I say, (yet let not my suspicions be their offences) perhaps the hardship of paying contributions to teachers, whom they could not in conscience attend, might next strike them, they might think

think themselves ill-treated in being compelled to assist in the support of an Establishment from which they derived no benefit, and they might consequently insist on the justice of being allowed to pay their money to what spiritual instructors, and probably in what manner they chose. I presume not to affirm confidently that it would be so, but the same principle of natural right, on which they now proceed, would authorise them, as well in this, as in their present attempts. In short, it is not (I repeat) that we presumptuously conclude, *with certainty*, that our own form of religion is the best; but we are of opinion, that in every well regulated state, one alone should be encouraged; all should be made as easy as possible, but one alone should be entrusted with power. Whenever then it shall be found that Calvinism, Arianism, Socinianism, or the persuasion of any other sectaries, is adopted by the majority of the people, it will be high time that what is now called the national religion should be displaced, and the more popular faith exalted in its stead: let the members of that alone be admitted to responsible situations civil or military, but let what is now called the Church of England, in common with the other inferior sects, enjoy that ease and security which she now so liberally extends to all others.

F I N I S.

